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ABSTRACT

The Hispanic folkloric tradition of Colorado and New Mexico had its beginning in the 1500's and 1600's when the area was colonized by the Spaniards. The "manito" (used by Hispanics in the Southwest to refer to descendants of the area's Spanish colonials) culture has maintained a strong sense of ethnic identity because of geographic isolation in rural and urban areas, close family ties, close relationship to the land, and definite patterns emphasizing culture and language maintenance. The "Valse de los Panos" (waltz of the scarves) is a unique example of how the Hispanic tradition still survives. This dance and music originated in the court dance of 16th century Spain. During that period, it was forbidden for physical contact to occur between a man and a woman. An acceptable way to dance without touching was to have a material scarf bind the dancers together. The woman's scarf was symbolic of her honor, which has always been the highest of values for the Hispanic caballero. Therefore, the dance's historical and cultural value assumes a greater significance when the psychological and cultural values that have given rise to this kinesthetic statement are considered. The dance has traditionally been performed at the initiation of a ball. The paper describes the dance and music. (NQA)

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# Hispanic Tradition

## Folkloric Music and Dance

January 1983

By Dr. Lorenzo A. Trujillo
Boulder, Colorado

The Hispanic folkloric tradition of Colorado and New Mexico had its beginnings in the 1500's and 1600's when this area was colonized by the Spaniards. The survival of the "manito" culture of Colorado and New Mexico has occurred because of special circumstances. This cultural group has maintained a strong sense of ethnic identity because of geographic isolation in rural, as well as urban areas, close family ties, a close relationship to the land, and definite patterns that emphasize culture and language maintenance. The continued existence of this culture as a vivid and real element of today's society is a phenomenon of true interest for the ethnologist.

While most ethnic groups in America have melted and lost their sense of ethnicity, the "manito" continues to flourish and pass on the values and language of his ancestors of the 1500's. The living dialect variety of the Southwest Spanish is a vivid example of cultural maintenance. In this article, a sketch of one one of the key figures of this past century will be presented, as well as his music and dance. Through this man and his life work, the "manito" tradition lives on with full color and life.

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*"Manito" - A term used by Hispanics of the Southwest to refer to the descendants of the Spanish Colonials of New Mexico and Colorado. The term is a shortened form of the word "hermanito" which means little brother. The diminutive form implies a caring and warm sense of brotherhood.

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On December 23, 1901, in Folsom, New Mexico, Mr. Victor Cárdenas was born. During the next 76 years of his life, Mr. Cárdenas performed with his famous violin collection for 17 years with the Denver Dancing Academy and with the Rocchio Dance Academy for 10 years. He had his own band, Los Viejitos, for 3 years and he played for a year in California with the Hank Thompson Band. In his later years, he was a founding member of the Mariachi de Colores and the founder of the Mariachi Guadalupana.

During this period it was my fortune to have studied and performed with Mr. Cárdenas. In his many performances, requests were made for the music of the past. Mr. Cárdenas always knew the music and how to do the dance. One of the dances requested was the "Valse de los Paños".

The "Valse de los Paños" is a unique example of how the Hispanic tradition still survives today. This dance and music originate in the court dance of Spain. Although the dance is of the 16th Century, it is popular today among the people of the villages of New Mexico and Colorado.

"Valse de los Paños" means the waltz of the scarves. During the dark ages and early renaissance in Spain, it was forbidden for physical contact to occur between a man and a woman. Therefore, an acceptable way for a man to dance with a woman, without touching her, was to have a material scarf bond the dancers together.

Further, if you have read Don Quixote de la Mancha, by Cervantes, you will recall the significance of the scarf and its colors. The scarf of a woman was symbolic of her honor. Honor has traditionally been and remains the highest of values for the Hispanic caballero.

A caballero's woman is the vestige of his and his family's honor. Therefore, the historical and cultural value of this dance assumes a greater significance when one considers the psychological and cultural values that have given rise to this kinesthetic statement.

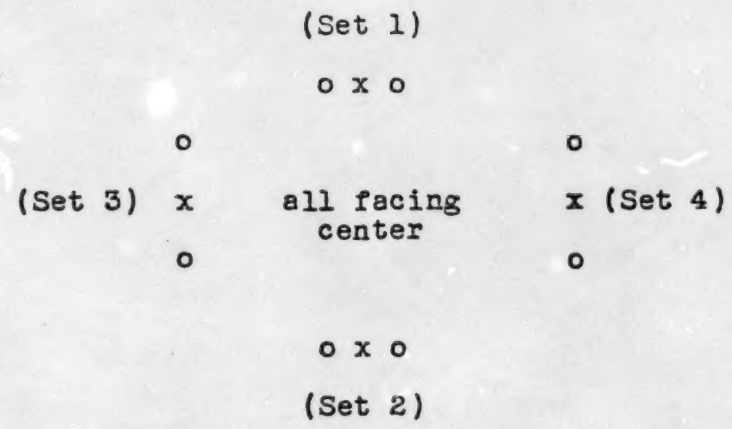
The dance was traditionally and is still performed at the initiation of a ball. You may agree that it would provide a proper medium for an upstanding woman to meet a suitable man.

The following is a description of the dance and the music, (as interpreted from a tape of Mr. Cárdenas' music titled "La Música de los Tiempos de Antes").

## Valse de los Paños

(New Mexico)

Formation: o = woman; x = man




Formation description: Make a square of four sides, each side consisting of three people, e.g., woman, man, woman. Each woman must have two scarves of identical color, one in each hand. The man holds the end of the scarf of each woman on his side.

Arms: Arms are raised halfway.

Dance description:

Part A

1 - Sets 1 and 2 dance to center from measures 1 through the first note in measure 9. On the second note in measure 9, they bow to each other and begin to return to their original place, still facing center. During this time, Sets 3 and 4 are dancing the step in place.

2 - Sets 3 and 4 dance to the center from measures 1 through the first note in measure 9, they bow to each other and begin to return to their original place, still facing center.

Part B

3 - Measures 17 through the second note in measure 25, all women on the right side of the man go under the left side scarf of the man and the man in the center turns under following the woman as she travels around him.

4 - Measures (third note) 25 through the end (32 or 36) all women on the left side of the man go under the right side scarf of the man and the man in the center turns under following the woman as she travels around him.

The music is written so the dance can be repeated as many times as desired.*

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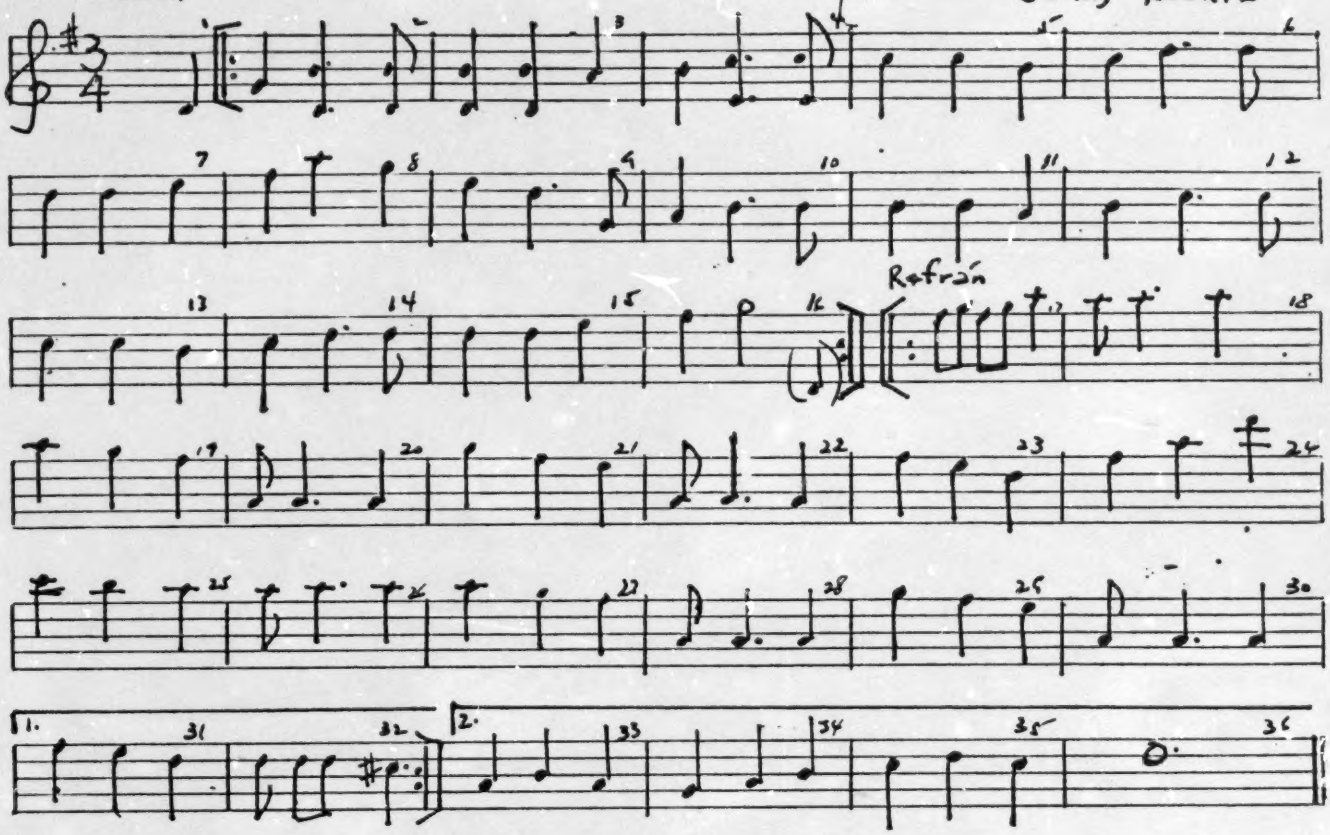
*Note: On various occasions, the author has noted that exhibition groups who lack live accompaniment have performed this dance with the following recording: "Redondo del Paño" on El Redondo Largo, MORE RECORDS 8027. Because this is a recording of another piece of music, it requires adaptations of the choreography sequencing to fit the music.

# Vals de los Paños

Traditional-Colorado & New Mex
Arr. by Lorenzo Trujillo & Jenny Koontz




During the past decade, much interest has been shown in the folklore of New Mexico and Colorado. Because of this interest, dances of Colorado and New Mexico were taught by Ms. Mela Sedillo at the National Convention of the Asociación Nacional de Grupos Folklóricos in 1976 in Pueblo, Colorado. This dance through the assistance of Mr. Cárdenas was prepared for exhibition by Ms. Marie Oralia Trujillo. Since her group began in Colorado, many other groups were formed and now present these dances in exhibition form. One of the more popular groups is the "Ancianos Alegres" of Brighton, Colorado. This is a senior citizen group who weekly meet to give tradition life. This dance was also taught by the author in 1979 at the California Folk Dance Federation Teacher Training Workshop in Sacramento, California.

This culture is alive and continues to flourish because of the strong sense of ethnic identity, pride, and maintenance of the value system that is the tradition of the Hispanic of the Southwest.